

Vermiculite Products Site Emergency Removal Action

Harris County
Houston, Texas

March 2014

This Fact Sheet will tell you about...

- Current Status
- Potential Threats to Public Health and Welfare
- Background Information
- What to Expect
- For More Information

Current Status

During a December 16, 2013 site visit, EPA noted that the area surrounding the facility is undergoing rapid residential redevelopment. Soil disturbing activities associated with construction could potentially expose workers and the general public to aerosolized asbestos fibers.

Because of this concern, EPA decided to refocus its assessment on off-site properties first. It was also observed that soil disturbing activities had commenced on the property immediately adjacent to and west of the facility. The property owner was informed of the potential contamination on the property and the dangers of disturbing the soil. EPA has removed the contaminated stockpiled soil and plans to initiate additional sampling to ensure public safety.

Potential Threats to Public Health and Welfare

Asbestos is of potential concern because chronic inhalation exposure to excessive levels of asbestos fibers suspended in air can result in lung diseases such as asbestosis, mesothelioma and lung cancer. The route of exposure that represents the greatest human health concern is the inhalation of airborne fibers, dispersed from soil by the action of wind or pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

Background Information

As part of a national re-evaluation of facilities that received vermiculite ore from the Zonolite Mine owned by WR Grace, in Libby, Montana, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency initiated a removal assessment at the Vermiculite Products, Inc. Site. The Site, in operation since 1941, is an active vermiculite exfoliation facility that processes vermiculite used in concrete aggregate. According to WR Grace shipping invoices, 213,750 tons of vermiculite ore from the Zonolite Mine were shipped to this facility between January 1967 and November 1986.

The Vermiculite Products facility is located at 3025 Maxroy Street in Houston, Harris County, Texas. There is an existing residential area west of the Site consisting of older housing stock. This area and several formerly commercial properties are currently being redeveloped with residential homes.

What to Expect During the Next Few Weeks

EPA will be performing sampling activities within the community to ensure public safety. Sampling activities will include soil and air sampling. Additionally, EPA will utilize a form of sampling called activity-based sampling. During this type of sampling, samplers perform various scenarios that mimic typical human soil disturbing activities, while wearing air sampling equipment. EPA will be working with your local community to keep you informed about current and future activities related to this Site.

EPA will implement an aggressive and comprehensive sampling plan in the community, to identify and eliminate any potential threat to human health, from asbestos-contaminated soil.



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For More Information

<http://epaossc.org>

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